

MARGARET PETERSON
HADDIX

New York Times Bestselling Author

THE MISSING
RESCUED

Rewriting the past to save the future

THE MISSING
RESCUED
AN E-STORY

MARGARET PETERSON
HADDIX

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

Thank you for downloading this eBook.

Find out about free book giveaways, exclusive content, and amazing sweepstakes!
Plus get updates on your favorite books, authors, and more when you join the Simon
& Schuster Teen mailing list.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

or visit us online to sign up at
eBookNews.SimonandSchuster.com/teen

RESCUED

They said the rest of the world was not like Russia.

They said the rest of time was not like 1918.

And that, the strangers said, was why they'd rescued Leonid.

They said he should be grateful.

* * *

Leonid opened his eyes to a room without windows or doors. It was just four blank walls, a ceiling, and a floor. Nothing else.

"Another prison," he whispered.

Katherine, the girl from the future, shook her head so hard that strands of her blond hair tangled together. If Leonid squinted, he could see her hair as a sort of golden crown, almost like the ones the grand duchesses used to wear.

"No, no," Katherine said. "This isn't a prison. It's a time hollow. A place away from time where we'll be safe."

"We're trapped. There's no way out," Leonid observed, even though he thought that should be obvious.

"Sure there is," Katherine said. "You get in and out with an Elucidator. It's like a cell phone that lets you travel through time."

Leonid didn't know what a cell phone was. And he didn't have an Elucidator, whatever that was.

So doesn't that make this a prison for me? he wondered.

The others in the room were sorting themselves out, untangling arms and legs from the heap they'd landed in. Besides Katherine, there were two others from the future, a man and a boy. Leonid had heard names for them, but surely those were fake. The boy was called Chip, and the man had only initials, JB.

Was the future such a strange place that adults—even adults powerful enough to travel through time—had only random letters to call their own? What could have happened to the patronymics, the way your father's name was built into yours, always identifying you as your father's son and showing your exact place in the world?

Being people from the future who were used to traveling through time, JB, Chip, and Katherine were already springing to their feet. Katherine bounced up and down on her toes, a motion that made her seem more familiar, like some young girl Leonid might have known back in his own time. Up until now she had seemed completely alien: She wore dungaree pants like a boy and a bizarre item of clothing he'd heard someone call a "sweatshirt"; she interrupted men while they were talking, even old men whose gray beards should have earned them respect.

And, everyone said, she had saved Leonid's life. His and Chip's and the grand duchesses' and the tsarevitch's, the most important one of all.

How could a mere girl have saved them?

Leonid turned his attention to the others who had traveled with him from 1918: two of the grand duchesses, Maria and Anastasia, and . . .

And where was the tsarevitch?

"His Royal Majesty!" Leonid cried, slipping in his panic and using a proper term for the boy, even though he thought he'd managed to break that habit months ago. The Bolshevik guards in Ekaterinburg beat anyone

who referred to the royal family as royalty. Still, Leonid had never gotten comfortable with calling the boy his familiar name, Alyosha, or even the slightly more formal Alexei or Nikolaevich. Using any of those names was like claiming there were no barriers between Leonid and the tsarevitch, and there were. *There were*. So mostly Leonid had referred to Alexei as "you" or "he" or "him."

Somehow, everyone back in 1918 always knew who he was talking about.

"Where is he?" Leonid shouted now.

Katherine reached over and patted Leonid's shoulder. (Girls in Leonid's time also did not pat older boys' shoulders. Not unless they were betrothed, or about to be. And Leonid had gotten the impression that Katherine belonged to Chip. He'd seen them kiss.)

"Don't worry about Gavin—I mean, Alexei," Katherine said, using yet another name for the tsarevitch. "Didn't you understand what was going on? Jonah and Ga—Alexei—were taken to a hospital to heal. Because they got shot when we were all escaping from that basement."

An emotion crossed her face that seemed wrong with her elfin features—it was more like the sorrow and grief and fear Leonid had seen on the faces of the very aged. Or on the faces of virtually everyone back in 1918 Russia.

Leonid struggled to bring himself to his feet. He made it only halfway up, to his knees.

"I go there too, then!" he demanded. "I serve him!"

"Not anymore," Katherine said. "You don't have to serve anyone ever again."

Chip put his hand on Katherine's arm.

"You think you're being nice, telling him that, but maybe you shouldn't go there yet," Chip told her. "You probably mean, 'You're free! You're in charge of your own destiny now!' But maybe he only hears, 'Your life is without purpose.'"

Leonid remembered hearing that Chip was somehow from the past and the future, both. Somehow he had been both a king in the Middle Ages and an ordinary boy in the twenty-first century.

So he presumed to think he could understand Leonid?

"What—was there still *slavery* in Russia in 1918?" Katherine asked, sounding horrified. "Was Leonid a *slave*?"

From the floor, the Grand Duchess Maria mumbled, "Our great-grandfather, Tsar Alexander II, freed the serfs in 1861. Two years before your Lincoln freed the American slaves."

"I am a servant, not a serf," Leonid agreed.

Katherine kept patting his shoulder.

"Well, you can still be Ga—er, Alexei's friend," she said, in a voice she probably thought of as kind. "He still needs you to be that."

Leonid didn't think he could ever claim such a role. But he argued anyway, "Wouldn't a *friend* be at the hospital with him? What if the doctors don't know he has—?"

He broke off, because how could he talk in front of these strangers about the tsarevitch's secret? About how just the smallest pinch or paper cut could set the tsarevitch to bleeding like a stuck pig?

I've seen him bleed for days from a scratch that should have healed in the blink of an eye, Leonid thought. *How could gunshot wounds do anything but kill him?*

"Don't worry, Leonid," the Grand Duchess Anastasia said, sitting up beside her sister. "Everyone taking care of Alexei knows about his hemophilia. Where he is now, I bet they could even cure it."

The man, JB, shut the small object he'd been staring at. The snapping noise made Leonid jump. It sounded nothing like a gunshot, but Leonid had heard gunfire too recently not to be on guard.

That's just a . . . pocketwatch, isn't it? Leonid wondered.

Or was it the mysterious time-travel device Katherine had mentioned—an Elucidator?

"I'm sorry, but we need to get some facts straight," JB said. "As much as we would love to cure Gavin's hemophilia, that's not feasible. It would ruin time to send him on to the twenty-first century in perfect health, when there isn't a cure there. It would raise too many questions. The doctors there would want to study him endlessly, in hopes of passing his cure on to everyone else with his disease."

Leonid finally managed to make it to his feet—slowly. He wanted to lunge at JB and grab the man by his collar, but he was afraid he would only throw himself off balance, and end up falling to the floor. Leonid instead put all his anger into his voice.

"You have a cure but you will not share it?" Leonid demanded. "That's . . . that's . . ."

He wanted to say, *treason*; he wanted to say, *inhuman cruelty*. But they were speaking English, not Russian, and Leonid had only a servant's grasp of English; he knew it only because the royal family spoke it sometimes.

Not surprisingly, they hadn't taught him the word for "treason."

"Leonid, it's not JB's fault," Anastasia said. "He's not being mean. Time travel messes up everything."

"But remember, all of us would be dead if it weren't for time travel," Chip said. He glanced at his girlfriend, with her tangled crown of blond hair. "Well, except for Katherine. She's the only one of us who was safe in her own native time."

Leonid did not want to talk about death. He looked around the blank, bland room. Somehow it seemed well lit, even though he could see no sign of any light fixtures.

Maybe there were other things here he couldn't see?

"Show me the kitchen, and I will make us all a meal," he said. "It's time to eat."

Leonid had no idea what time it was. It had been the middle of the night when he'd sneaked down into the basement to look for Alexei. Since then, there'd been so many gunshots and so much zooming back and forth through time—surely it was long past time for breakfast.

Katherine giggled, a startlingly girlish sound.

"There's no kitchen here," she said. "There's no time, either. And as long as we're here, we'll never get hungry or thirsty. That's how time hollows work."

Leonid could not imagine not being hungry. His uncle had always been a little vague about exactly when Leonid was born, but the royal cook, Ivan Kharitonov, said it was clear Leonid was somewhere in his teen years by the way Leonid could eat and eat and eat, and then be hungry five minutes later.

But—this was odd—Leonid actually didn't feel any hunger pangs right now. He couldn't remember the last time he hadn't felt hungry.

Before Ekaterinburg, before Tobolsk . . . probably when the tsar was still in power? he thought.

"Wounds can't heal in a time hollow either," Chip said, as if he was trying hard to make sure Leonid understood. "That's why Alexei and Jonah have to be treated in a hospital in the future, apart from us, while we're all waiting here."

Katherine raised one of her elbows, as if showing it off.

"I'm just lucky the future medicine could cure my broken arm so quickly, and I didn't have to stay in the hospital too," she said.

Leonid had not even known about Katherine's broken arm. There'd been so much danger, pain, and death in the basement they'd all left, it was impossible to keep track of everyone's wounds.

JB slid the item that might be an Elucidator into his pocket.

"I have to go straighten some things out," he said. "The five of you will be perfectly safe here. Chip and Katherine, can you take care of everyone? And, um, be careful about how much you reveal. We're still double-checking the best placement for Maria and Leonid. What if we're wrong about everything working out for them to go to the twenty-first century with the rest of you?"

Anastasia put her arm around Maria's shoulder.

"Maria goes to the exact same time period as me!" she cried. "She's my sister! She's the only sister I have left!"

Because Olga and Tatiana are dead, Leonid thought with an ache.

He could barely allow himself to think the names of the two grand duchesses no one had been able to rescue. They'd died alongside the tsar and the tsarina and the cook and the doctor and the maid and the valet. . . .

Stop! he told himself. *Stop!*

"And Leonid—Leonid was almost like a brother to Alexei," Anastasia continued. "They need each other!"

Leonid never would have claimed such a relationship.

"Daniella," JB said with a grimace, using Anastasia's other name. "We're doing our best. But . . . original time was not kind to your family. Or to your loyal servants. Can't you see how many limitations we face? Can't you see that *anything* we manage is going to be better than what happened originally?"

Anastasia's glare was fierce.

"I just lost my parents and two of my three sisters, and you say there's no way we can go back to rescue them," she said, narrowing her eyes at JB. "Don't you dare say anything else about limitations. Wherever Maria and I go from here, we go *together*."

She tightened her grip on Maria's shoulder and clasped Maria's hand as if she were joining together some unbreakable chain.

Doesn't she remember how weak flesh and bone really are? Leonid wondered. *How easily people she loves can be destroyed? Didn't she see . . . ?*

Leonid didn't let himself remember anything else.

Tears started rolling down Maria's face, but there was nothing any of them could do about that.

"Ahem," JB said, his gaze darting away. "Katherine and Chip—you two are in charge. You'll find viewing screens on the walls, but right now they're set to show nothing that took place after July 17, 1918. We won't authorize anything else until we're sure it's safe for Leonid and Maria to see it."

"How will we contact you if anything happens?" Katherine asked.

"You'll find a link through the screens," JB said. "But you're in a time hollow. You're totally safe and protected. Nothing's going to happen."

Leonid didn't believe the man. It was impossible to believe a promise like that with the sound of gunfire still echoing in his ears.

* * *

"Leo," Katherine said after JB left. It might have been just a moment after he vanished, or an hour or two. Maybe even a day. Leonid was having almost as much trouble keeping track of time in this blank, empty, quiet room as he'd had in the basement when the bullets were flying.

Leonid waited politely for her to say the rest of his name, but she didn't.

"Uh . . . ," Leonid began.

"I was just thinking that's what you should call yourself in the twenty-first century," Katherine said. "Because I'm sure it will work out that you'll get to come with us, and live close by, like this other girl we know, Andrea, who got to have her grandfather come from the 1600s with her. And so you'll be in the United States. And Leo is a much more common name there than Leonid, so . . ."

She glanced at Chip, who was frowning.

"He's Leonid," Maria said sternly. "Le-o-nid. Or Lenka, if you know him well."

She glared, making it clear that she didn't think Katherine would ever be entitled to call Leonid that.

Katherine darted her gaze back and forth between Chip and Maria.

"I'm doing it again, aren't I?" Katherine asked. "Thinking Leonid would see things the same way as me? Really, Leonid, you can call yourself

anything you want when we go to the twenty-first century. You could be Trevor, Josh, Zach . . ."

"Or Leonid," Chip said, in the manner of someone putting his foot down.

All five of them were quiet for a moment. Or maybe an hour. Then Maria began to sniffle again.

"I'm sorry, but there's nothing to do!" she complained. "And with nothing to do, all I can do is think about . . ."

The dead, Leonid thought. *The horror we all just escaped.*

He was having the same problem. But it was surprising that Maria would be the one on the verge of tears, because she had always seemed the strongest of the four Romanov sisters. She was the one who carried fourteen-year-old Alexei up and down the stairs when he was in too much pain to walk; she was the one who comforted her mother when the woman screamed with headache and backache and pleas to God to deliver her from her agony. Leonid himself could handle the most petulant of Alexei's childish demands, but he'd sooner meet the devil than be in the same room with the tsarina when the tsarina was in pain.

And Maria sits with her mother like that for hours. . . . Leonid caught his mistake. *She used to do that before her mother died. . . .*

"Funny cat videos," Anastasia said, easing her arm around her sister once again. "Maria, that's what you need. Didn't that JB guy say something about screens? Is there Wi-Fi? Can we watch YouTube? Maria, you'll see when you get to the twenty-first century, funny cat videos are the best way to cheer yourself up. There's this one where the cat plays 'Chopsticks' on the piano and then . . . well, you have to see it. Chip, Katherine—how do we make that happen?"

Leonid knew what a cat was. He knew what a piano was. Pretty much everything else Anastasia said might as well have been in yet another foreign language, one he'd never heard before. He remembered that Anastasia, like Chip, had somehow lived two lives, in two different times. She'd had one childhood as Anastasia in the early twentieth century and another one as someone named Daniella in the early twenty-first century.

"I don't think that . . .," Chip began hesitantly.

"You know YouTube didn't exist in 1918," Katherine said scornfully. "Remember, JB has the screens set to block out everything after that."

Anastasia's face fell, showing entirely too much grief for someone simply being denied the chance to see a cat on a piano. Katherine must have noticed, because she continued in a much kinder voice, "But were there movies back in the early 1900s? Funny movies? Anything you laughed at back then that you want us to call up now?"

"Charlie Chaplin!" Anastasia cried. "Oh, Maria, remember the time we pretended we were in a Charlie Chaplin movie? And I put on a fake moustache and did that walk like a wobbling duck . . ."

As she spoke, Chip and Katherine both moved toward one of the walls, feeling around as if they were looking for something—a hidden knob, maybe, or a secret lever. They must have hit some kind of switch, because suddenly an image sprang up on the wall, as immediate as looking out a window. And somehow it showed exactly the moment from the past that Anastasia was describing: Anastasia at perhaps thirteen or fourteen, out in the garden back at Tsarkoe Selo, with the grand columns of the Catherine Palace towering behind her. It had to be spring or early summer, because the roses were in bloom. Anastasia was wearing a lacy white dress with a lovely blue sash—Leonid had forgotten how beautiful all the grand

duchesses used to be before the war, before the measles, before the shaved heads, before the worry and fear of Tobolsk and Ekaterinburg and that very last, terrible day and night. It was cruel to think, but Anastasia had always been the shortest and the dumpiest of the sisters; the ongoing debate about which of the four girls was the prettiest always veered between Olga, Tatiana, and Maria. Anastasia was never mentioned.

But now, in the scene before them, Anastasia's grand flag of dark blond hair waved gently behind her in the breeze; her bright blue eyes crinkled with joy and laughter. Nobody else in the world, before or after, could have been as beautiful as Anastasia in that moment.

Then she crammed a bowler derby on her head and held a fuzzy black caterpillar made of knotted yarn on her upper lip and began to waddle.

Maria appeared beside Anastasia in the scene on the wall. Maria-on-the-wall was screaming with laughter at her sister's imitation; she was so lost in mirth that she'd given up trying to play whatever character she was supposed to portray.

And then, on the wall, Olga and Tatiana stepped up beside their younger sisters. The two of them glowed as brightly as the sunshine on their white lace dresses; they were royal young ladies right at the age when princes from all across Europe were expected to start coming to court them.

A lot of things had been expected before the war that never came to pass.

"Oh, Anastasia, you are so silly," Tatiana was saying on the wall, even as she fondly ruffled the younger girl's hair.

Sitting on the floor in front of the wall, the real Anastasia and Maria began to weep.

"How could they have been so beautiful and alive then, and so dead now?" Anastasia wailed. "How could we have lost them?"

Sobbing was such a messy thing. Leonid had never been able to understand why God created humans with so much snot and so many tears inside them.

Leonid pulled out his handkerchief and timidly handed it to Anastasia, who took it and blew her nose on it with an unladylike snort. Leonid looked pointedly at Chip. If the other boy truly had been a king once upon a time, he shouldn't need to be reminded of his gentlemanly duty to give his handkerchief to Maria.

Chip gave a helpless shrug.

"Sorry, dude," he said. "Kids don't carry handkerchiefs in the twenty-first century."

"And I don't have any Kleenex," Katherine mumbled, patting the pockets of her own pants. She turned to face the wall, where the happy past kept playing out, the four beautiful grand duchesses laughing and hugging and laughing again.

"Would you just stop?" Katherine yelled at the wall. "Can't you see this isn't helping?"

Instantly the wall went blank.

On the floor, Anastasia and Maria kept crying, sharing Leonid's sodden handkerchief between them.

* * *

Hours—or maybe days—later, Leonid went to speak to Chip and Katherine privately, off to the side.

"I don't want to upset the grand duchesses," he began. "But there are people I lost too. Er, I don't know if they're lost or not. I don't know what happened to them. There were no letters . . . but then, everyone stopped getting letters. . . ."

He kept his head down. He couldn't bring himself to look either Chip or Katherine directly in the face. Would they think it forward of him, a mere servant, to wish for anything? Katherine had rescued him from certain death; how could he ask for more than that?

Chip glanced over his shoulder toward Maria and Anastasia, who were still huddled together on the floor. They'd stopped crying, but somehow their dry eyes didn't make them look any less grief-stricken. Anastasia stroked Maria's hair; Maria seemed to be whispering a prayer.

Chip put his arm around Leonid in a brotherly fashion, and drew him farther away from the grand duchesses, toward the back wall.

"I understand how you feel," Chip said. "When I left the 1400s, there were lots of people I wondered about. I looked them up as best I could—"

"You did?" Katherine said. "I didn't know that."

Chip shrugged as helplessly as when he lacked a handkerchief.

"There wasn't much to find," he said. "Forsooth, it was as though most of them had never lived."

"He goes all medieval on us sometimes when he's remembering the past," Katherine apologized.

Leonid didn't quite know what the word "medieval" meant, but he could sense a logic in Katherine's words. Chip seemed more like a boy from the past than from the future right now. He wore his bright blond hair in short, childish curls around his face, and his voice veered between manly depth

and boyish squawking. His skin was smooth, nowhere close to needing its first shave.

And yet, for all that, he had an ancient air about him.

"Everyone dies eventually, Leonid," Chip said, like a priest intoning a solemn truth. "Mayhap it is best not to know what happened in the end to people you remember as young and healthy and alive—so alive."

"Chip traveled more than five hundred years into the future from his original time," Katherine told Leonid. "Of course everyone he knew from his original life died. With you, it's only going to be about a century, but still —"

"I just saw my uncle in May!" Leonid protested. "The Bolsheviks wouldn't let him stay at the house in Ekaterinburg with everyone else. And then yesterday—I mean, the day before that awful night in the basement—just before dinner the guards told me he'd come for me. That was why they took me away and told me to wait for him in the house across the street...."

Leonid saw Chip and Katherine exchange glances.

"Oh," Katherine said. "He doesn't know."

"Know what?" Leonid asked.

For a long moment, neither of them answered.

"We only heard gossip," Chip said. "Guards talking . . . Maybe it isn't even true."

"*What* isn't true?" Leonid asked, so loudly he feared one of the grand duchesses might have heard. But when he glanced back over his shoulder, they were still huddled together, lost in their own grief.

Katherine shook her head, the hair she'd pulled back like a horse's tail flipping side to side.

"Not knowing for sure hurts too, doesn't it?" she asked Leonid. "I'm sorry, but when Chip and Jonah and I were in 1918, we heard the guards say that your uncle was already dead. The story about him coming for you—that was all a lie. A lie to save your life, actually."

Leonid barely heard that last part. He could make no sense of it. His uncle Ivan dead? Impossible! Ivan had worn such a fine sailor's uniform when he first came to Leonid's tiny village of Sverchokova. He was so tall and muscular, and he told such fine stories. He worked for the tsar. He sailed the tsar's yacht for him in the summertime; he served as valet at one of the tsar's palaces the rest of the year.

Leonid's own father had died so long ago Leonid didn't remember him; Leonid clung to his uncle as only a little boy could. And then Leonid's mother, seeing this, had begged Ivan to take Leonid back to the palace with him, to put Leonid to work for the royal family too.

Ivan had changed everything about Leonid's life. Ivan had *made* Leonid's life.

How could he be dead?

"Show me," Leonid demanded. "You can't just say these things and not—"

Katherine winced, but then she muttered, "Show us what happened to Leonid's uncle Ivan after the last time they saw each other."

A scene appeared on the wall again, but Leonid didn't feel like it was a miracle this time. He was no longer watching beautiful, happy girls in a sunny garden. He was watching his uncle and Nagorny, another of the royal family's servants, being led from the house in Ekaterinburg. Like Ivan, Nagorny had once been a sailor on the tsar's yacht; before Ekaterinburg it had also been Nagorny's job to take care of Alexei.

Leonid could see that both Ivan and Nagorny were trying hard to stand tall and walk fearlessly—to show only disdain for the cluster of Bolshevik guards around them. But Leonid could also see that both men were deeply afraid. It was written in the set of their jaws, in the slight tremor in their strides.

The guards led Ivan and Nagorny through the double set of fences, out to the street. Ivan and Nagorny were placed in separate carriages, each of them surrounded only by men who hated them.

Now Ivan and Nagorny were entering a prison.

Now Ivan and Nagorny were being shot, crumpling to the ground, dying. . . .

"Stop!" Chip shouted. "No more! Silence!"

Leonid had forgotten Chip was there. Leonid had forgotten everything but that one moment in May 1918, everything but his uncle's body falling. Quickly Leonid looked behind him—yes, the grand duchesses had heard the gunshots. They were staring at the horrifying scene on the wall, their wide eyes pooling once again with tears.

"Not them, too!" Anastasia exploded. "Must we lose everyone we loved?" She glanced at Leonid and bit her lip. "I didn't mean—"

"It happened so quickly," Katherine was apologizing, more to the grand duchesses than to Leonid. "I thought we'd have some warning, and we could get a sense of what was going to happen and then shut it off—"

"Save them!" Maria shrieked from her place on the floor. "You saved me and Anastasia and Alexei and Leonid—go back and save Ivan and Nagorny, too!"

Now it was Katherine whose eyes filled with tears.

"We can't," she said. "I'm sorry. It's too late."

"I know it's hard to understand," Chip said soothingly, sounding like he was trying to be as diplomatic as a king. "But JB said there were only a few windows of opportunity for time travelers to get in and out in 1918. It was such a damaged year. With World War I and all the fighting in Russia . . . it's a miracle anybody could be saved. We can't get to Ivan."

Leonid's heart throbbed with pain, as if his body had been riddled with bullets too. It hurt so badly that his uncle was gone. But it also hurt that Maria, not Leonid, had been the one to beg for Ivan's life. What kind of nephew was Leonid that he could only stand there, meekly watching his uncle die?

"He was *my* uncle," Leonid said. "Mine. He is my sorrow to grieve."

But Leonid accidentally spoke in Russian—and not just Russian, but the garbled dialect that he'd used when he'd first gone to the palace from his tiny village. Probably nobody understood him. Probably nobody understood Leonid at all.

* * *

It felt like night—or as much as any time could feel like anything in this nowhere of a no place.

Chip and Katherine were huddled together whispering in one corner of the room, their heads tilted together. Anastasia and Maria were in another corner, their arms linked, Maria's head on Anastasia's shoulder. They were so close that locks of their same-color, same-texture hair coiled together into one long curl dangling between them.

Leonid was alone.

He went to the far corner of the room, to the wall where he'd watched his uncle die.

"Is it possible that you could show me something privately, so secretly and quietly that only I will see and hear?" he asked.

He waited, and just at the moment he was ready to give up, the word "Yes" seemed to whisper from the wall.

It was followed by the word "Da." The wall was willing to speak Russian to him.

"Show me . . . ," Leonid decided to work up to what he both wanted and feared. "Show me the moment I first met Clothilde."

It would mean seeing his uncle again, and that would be hard, but Leonid was ready to risk that.

The blank wall seemed to melt away, and Leonid could see a younger version of himself walking beside his uncle, the man just as tall and muscular and invincible-looking as ever. Leonid was perhaps eleven or twelve. The two of them had just arrived at Tsarkoe Selo from Leonid's village, and Leonid's mouth was agape with wonder at his first glimpses of palaces and Fabergé eggs and luxury. Really, at that point he would have been awed by anything beyond ramshackle wooden huts, but Tsarkoe Selo was the pinnacle of the glories of three hundred years of Romanov rule. The soaring ceilings, the gleaming parquet dance floors, the meticulously tended gardens . . . No wonder Leonid's eyes seemed perpetually on the verge of popping out of his head.

Young Leonid and his uncle Ivan stepped into a drawing room—though of course Leonid wouldn't have known to call it a drawing room then. Across the room, a young girl in a sleek black dress and a frilly apron looked up and smiled.

"Is that . . . is that one of the grand duchesses?" young Leonid whispered to his uncle.

Ivan seemed to be doing his best to hide a smile.

"No, just one of the maids," he whispered back. "See her feather duster?"

Leonid had not. Not exactly. As much as he'd noticed the feathery thing in Clothilde's hand, he'd thought it was yet another adornment, an oversize bracelet perhaps—some luxurious fashion that had not yet reached his village.

And, indeed, no one used feather dusters there.

"Even maids at the palace are that beautiful?" young Leonid asked, his eyes widening with amazement.

Ivan laughed.

"This one is," he said.

Clothilde *was* beautiful; it wasn't just Leonid's memory playing tricks on him. Against her crisp black dress, her long, dark hair glistened in the sunlight coming through the perfectly polished window. Her green eyes were warm with laughter, because of course she'd heard Ivan and Leonid's whispers. Her smile was more for Ivan than for Leonid—Leonid hadn't seen that then, but he did now. It didn't matter. Her eyes stayed kind when they alighted on Leonid in all his gawky, gaping awkwardness.

She walked toward Ivan and Leonid, and gave an exaggerated curtsy. Then she reached over and boldly brushed the hair from Leonid's forehead.

"Fresh from the countryside, I see," she said. "I'm Clothilde. Pleased to meet you."

"Fresh from France?" Ivan ventured to guess.

Clothilde laughed, in a way Leonid hadn't understood back then. There was an edge to it.

"That is what the tsarina—and I—would like everyone to believe," she said.

Leonid would learn later that Clothilde had once been an ordinary Russian Masha, but it was more convenient to take on a French name and accent. French maids made more money; they were less likely to be fired, no matter how bad they were at dusting or pouring tea.

Back then, fresh from the countryside, Leonid could never have imagined trying to be anyone but himself. He never would have imagined that he *could* be anyone but himself: an ordinary peasant boy.

Leonid got lost in his thoughts—he missed whatever Ivan said back to Clothilde. He'd probably missed half the conversation the first time around too.

But he still remembered what Clothilde had said to him next.

On the wall, she was turning toward the impossibly young, naïve peasant Leonid. She was about to speak. . . .

"Be careful here, little country boy," she said. "Don't go falling for every pretty girl you see. *I saw you first.*"

Leonid could remember how that had made him feel when he first heard those words. He felt *claimed*. He felt like Clothilde was really saying, *I've fallen in love with you just as much as you've fallen in love with me. This is my promise: We'll be together forever. We were fated for this moment. We were fated to be as one.*

Now Leonid saw how completely Clothilde had been teasing him. It had been cruel, really, to flirt so outrageously with such an innocent.

But what if we were fated? Leonid wondered. *What if Clothilde somehow sensed it, even then?*

Could they still be fated now? Could they have been meant to share something that transcended even Leonid being yanked out of time?

"Stop," Leonid told the wall, because he remembered that he'd stumbled over his own feet walking away from Clothilde that first day, and he didn't need to watch that. Also, he needed to do something before he lost his nerve. "Show me where Clothilde is right now."

"There isn't any such thing as 'now' in a time hollow," the wall whispered back to him.

"I mean in 1918," Leonid corrected himself. "In July. The day I . . . left."

The scene on the wall changed. The palace drawing room disappeared; a cramped, dirty hovel appeared in its place.

It took Leonid a moment to recognize Clothilde. She wore a ragged dress now, her hair held back with a tattered ribbon. She stood by a pot hung over an open flame, and even without being able to see into the pot, Leonid was pretty sure it would contain nothing but watery soup. Clothilde was so thin Leonid could see the outline of her ribs through her dress when she bent over the pot. She had hollows in her cheeks that seemed deep enough to drink from.

Quick death by gunfire or slow death by starvation . . . were those the only choices for the tsar's servants after the tsar lost power? Leonid wondered.

No—there was also what had happened to Leonid.

* * *

It turned out it was possible to talk with Alexei and the other injured boy, Jonah, even though they were recovering from their bullet wounds in a hospital in the far-distant future, and Leonid and the others were outside of time entirely.

Everyone crowded together in front of the center section of the wall, where they were going to see the two boys. The three girls jostled their way closest to the screen; Chip and Leonid held back.

"They're all concerned about their brothers," Chip said with a shrug. At Leonid's blank look, he added, "Oh—didn't you know that Katherine is Jonah's sister?"

"No," Leonid said, clipping off the word more than he meant to. "Nobody told me that."

Chip shook his head and rolled his eyes a little.

"I guess there wasn't really time when we first met you to say things like, 'Hello, my name is Chip Winston. I'm thirteen years old, and I live in Liston, Ohio. Who are you?'" he said.

Leonid had not known that Chip had a last name. Liston, Ohio, sounded like a disease to Leonid, but he guessed it was probably the name of a place in America.

"And it's like there's too much time in a time hollow," Chip went on. "You think of things you should say or do, but then you're like, *Eh, I can do that later. What's it going to matter? Now, later, it's all the same.*"

Leonid had had that problem too. He'd thought it was just because he had seen people die, just because he had lost his homeland and his home time.

"Do *you* have any brothers or sisters?" Leonid asked Chip.

A shadow crossed Chip's face.

"I grew up thinking I was an only child in the twenty-first century," he said. "Then when I went back in time, I met my brother and five sisters. My brother, Alex, was rescued with me, and I talk to him every day. I never knew my sisters very well, but . . . I miss them. They would have loved the twenty-first century. There was so much that wasn't possible for them in the 1400s. . . ."

Leonid braced himself for Chip to say, *What about you?* Leonid planned to say, *It was just me and my uncle*, because it would not do to talk about the happy little family he'd been part of at the palace: not just his uncle, but his aunt Manya and the three little cousins as well.

But before Chip could say anything else, Alexei and Jonah appeared on the wall. It looked like they were just on the other side of a window—an open window. Maria reached out as if she planned to touch Alexei's face; she jumped back when her fingers brushed only solid wall.

"It's so good to see all of you!" Alexei exclaimed.

"We're *not* going to get you out of trouble if you've been misbehaving," Maria said. She seemed to be trying hard to sound like a stern, reproofing older sister, even as she gazed adoringly at her brother.

Alexei lifted his hand like he was taking a pledge.

"God's honest truth," he said. "I'm so grateful just to be alive. I've turned over a new leaf."

"What if we kind of miss the bad old Alexei?" Anastasia teased. "I don't want you tricking me into going back in time ever again. But something like a toad slipped in my bed wouldn't be so awful."

"Because that would mean we were together again," Maria added. "And . . . that you were healthy enough to make trouble. You look good, Alyosha."

"I feel good," Alexei said. "Those bullets were *nothing*."

For a moment, he looked like the same old Alexei who bragged that his toy soldiers could beat Leonid's toy soldiers every time. But then his face turned more serious. It was like watching him become an entirely different person.

"You're going to have to start calling me Gavin, not Alexei," he said. "And I promise, I'm going to live as Gavin in a way that makes me worthy of how Katherine risked her life to save me."

Leonid saw Chip squeeze Katherine's hand; he saw Maria and Anastasia nodding, too overcome to speak.

"He's even promised to stop snoring at night!" Jonah said, rolling his eyes and giving Alexei/Gavin a light, joking shove.

Alexei/Gavin did not even wince at the touch. He just shoved Jonah back and threw his hands in the air in mocking surrender.

Even though Alexei/Gavin was wearing a loose-fitting cotton shirt, Leonid could tell by the way it hung and by the way Alexei/Gavin moved that the boy no longer had huge, bulbous, painfully swollen joints; his elbows and wrists were shaped just like anyone else's.

"They did cure you, Alexei," Leonid blurted out. "Praise be to God!"

"No, they—" Alexei/Gavin glanced down at his normal-looking body, and seemed to understand what Leonid meant. "This is how I have always looked as Gavin. Even in the twenty-first century, they have treatment for my hemophilia. I still *have* the disease, but I don't suffer from it like I did when I was Alexei. I understand the difference now."

"Oh," Leonid said. "That's good."

Jonah and Katherine and Chip started talking then, something about trying to figure out how they could "call" each other regularly every day when Jonah and Alexei/Gavin were part of normal time and all the others were outside it. The time-travel concepts were far beyond what Leonid could grasp. He wasn't really paying attention, anyhow.

Because all he could think was, *Alexei won't need me in the twenty-first century. Nobody will need me there.*

Of course it had been worth it for Katherine to risk her life to go back in time and save Alexei, Anastasia, Maria, and Chip. They were royalty; they were important. History would remember them forever.

But what could Leonid do that made it worth saving him?

* * *

JB came back.

One minute there was nothing in the center of the room; the next moment the man from the future stood there as solid and real as anyone.

"JB!" Katherine exclaimed, jumping up and running over to hug him.

Chip also rose to shake JB's hand. Anastasia, Maria, and Leonid hung back.

JB looked around, raising an eyebrow at the screens everyone had been clustered around.

"Interesting choices," he observed.

Chip had been showing Katherine scenes from England in the 1400s—all his pretty blond princess sisters looked happy enough with their lives. One had even become queen.

Maria and Anastasia had been watching their parents' courtship back in the late 1800s, and Leonid had been timidly hovering behind them, trying to decide whether he needed to hide the fact that he was watching too. It was so strange to see the tsar and tsarina as young people shyly gazing into each other's eyes. It was so strange to see the tsarina smiling and untroubled with pain; to see the tsar unburdened and unstooped.

"So often royal marriages are only for political reasons, bringing together a husband and wife who have nothing in common," Maria said. "It is . . . comforting . . . to see how our parents always had more than that. To see how much they loved each other from the start."

"We like seeing them happy," Anastasia said. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"No," JB said, and his eyes seemed to twinkle a bit. "But I've brought you news that I believe will make you even happier. Everything is set for Maria and Leonid to go to the twenty-first century when it's time to move on. We've double-checked all the possible repercussions, and there are no obstacles."

"Hurray!" Anastasia exclaimed, throwing her arms around Maria.

Katherine and Chip thumped Leonid on the back as if he'd just won some sort of athletic endeavor.

"Angela agreed to let the two of them move in with her for a while," JB continued.

"And then I'll tell my parents I've found my long-lost birth sister, and they'll let Maria move in with *us*," Anastasia said fiercely.

"Yes, we did see that as a possible outcome," JB said, laughing. "If you emphasize how having Maria around will make you more responsible and

studious, it might even work."

And then I will be left alone with a stranger? Leonid wondered.

"Who's Angela?" he asked.

"Oh, she's great," Katherine assured him. She patted his back even harder. "She's the only grown-up in the twenty-first century who knows about all the time travel. She'll take good care of you and Maria."

"Exactly," JB said, nodding.

He held a small boxlike device close to the wall where the impossibly young tsar and the impossibly young tsarina stood holding hands for the very first time.

"I'm updating the controls on the screens so that everyone can see everything that happened up until the exact moment in the twenty-first century when Gavin, Daniella, Chip, Jonah, and Katherine left to go to 1918," JB added. "That way, you guys can prepare Maria and Leonid for what to expect. I'm counting on the rest of you to be very *gentle* explaining all the events of the twentieth century."

For some reason, Katherine started bouncing up and down once again.

"The screens will show us *everything*?" she squealed. "Does that mean we can finally find out Jonah's other identity? Who was he in original time?"

The screens—the one showing 1400s royalty and the one showing 1800s royalty—both froze, making the tsar and the tsarina and the blond English princesses seem stricken and stuck in time.

JB shook his head.

"I should clarify," he said. "The screens will show you everything that's appropriate for you to know going back to the time you left. In regards to Jonah's original identity, that is something that would be interpreted very

narrowly. So no, Katherine, you're not going to find that out in this time hollow."

Katherine shrugged and grinned.

"You can't blame me for trying, can you?"

JB shook his head and turned to Leonid.

"You are the one who may require the most explanations," JB said. "You were the person we had to do the most checking on. Because you were never supposed to die in that basement massacre."

It took a moment for JB's words to sink in. Then Leonid exploded with questions.

"What?" he said. "I wasn't supposed to die? Then why did I need to be saved? How could I have not died, when the guards were killing everyone?"

Didn't they think I was worth killing? he wondered.

JB put a steadying hand on Leonid's shoulder.

"In original time you were never in that cellar that night to begin with," JB said.

"But—I went down those stairs!" Leonid protested. "I heard the truck from across the street and I heard the fighting in the mountains, and I thought the family was in danger, and they were going to be moved, or—"

Leonid was with people from the future who seemed to know everything, but he still found it hard to explain anything about that night. Maybe he still didn't quite understand what he'd done.

JB was regarding Leonid with the kindest of expressions.

"I have the monitors set up so you will be able to see what happened originally, if you want," he said. "You were supposed to live into the 1920s,

and we had to make absolutely certain there would be no long-term damage to time, having you vanish a decade early."

"And there won't be any damage," Katherine said firmly, as if she still thought she needed to persuade JB. "Leonid will be so much better off in the twenty-first century."

JB sighed.

"That part's indisputable," he said. "Russia between 1918 and the late 1920s was an awful place for Leonid. We knew that from the start. It was just all the other issues with time we were worried about. So you may want to say, 'I told you so,' Katherine, but I'm not going to give you that satisfaction."

Katherine just made a mocking face at him—clearly she and JB were fond of each other, no matter how much they seemed to argue.

But Leonid was thinking, *I was supposed to live a decade more, and none of that time meant anything? Was I really that worthless?*

* * *

"Why do I look like a ghost?" Leonid asked Chip.

After JB left, Leonid had gotten up the nerve to watch the portion of his life that would never happen now. He was trying to do it privately, in secret; he wanted to be the only one who saw his own worthlessness. But he'd been baffled right away. One moment he'd seen himself on the screen looking terrified as he lay in a makeshift bed on the floor. Around him, the *booms* and *crashes* and *thuds* of artillery fire seemed to be getting closer and closer, perhaps even coming from the next street over. The next moment, his body had seemed to separate in two: one normal-looking version of himself

suddenly stood up; another see-through version continuing to cower in his blankets.

"That's your tracer," Chip said, pointing to the ghostly figure when Leonid drew him over to the screen. "Tracers show what you would have done in original time if your life hadn't been changed by time travelers."

Leonid squinted back and forth between the screen and Chip.

"But I hadn't met any time travelers then," Leonid said. "I didn't meet any time travelers until I was suddenly flying through time with you, Katherine, and Jonah."

"Things had already changed for you because of time travel," Chip said. "You just didn't know it. Look." He turned to the screen and gave it an instruction: "Show Leonid that afternoon, when he was playing toy soldiers with Alexei. When the changes started for the two of them."

"I remember what happened then!" Leonid protested. But both Chip and the screen ignored him.

On the screen, Leonid saw himself lying on his stomach on the floor with Alexei, several battalions' worth of toy soldiers lined up between them. Alexei once again looked horribly ill, with one knee swollen and bandaged and one of his elbows nearly as engorged. It was painful just to look at the boy, but Leonid-on-the-wall gazed steadily at him.

"You're a good friend, Leonid," Alexei said on the wall. "You've been very loyal, both at Tobolsk and here in Ekaterinburg. When you leave today, you should . . . should take half of my soldiers with you. They belong to you now."

"See how his mouth lights up a little when he speaks?" Chip asked. "That's a sign that he didn't say that in original time. But this time around, it was like he was really Gavin and Alexei both, at the same time, and Gavin

knew the guards were planning to kill all the Romanovs that night. At that point it didn't look like there was any chance of rescue, and that was the only way Gavin could think of to thank you for everything you'd done. I mean, toy soldiers—kind of stupid, right? But it set events in motion that made it possible for JB to save Jonah, and for Katherine to save the rest of us. And one of those events was you getting up that night instead of staying across the street and hearing the Romanovs being killed."

Leonid winced. On the screen, he wasn't even acting grateful for Alexei's gift.

"And then I'll have to carry them back and forth when we play again tomorrow?" he complained, sounding peevish. It had always been hard not to sound peevish after an hour or two of trying to entertain Alexei. Leonid thought he usually did a better job of hiding his annoyance.

"It's weird that something so small can change everything, isn't it?" Chip asked.

"You're saying I would have been a coward without those toy soldiers?" Leonid asked.

"You tell me," Chip said. "You're the one who decided to walk down into that basement. Why did you do it?"

Did Chip actually expect an answer?

"I want to see what I would have done for the next ten years of my life," Leonid said stiffly. "What would have happened to me if I hadn't been killed or rescued."

"Go for it," Chip said with a shrug.

The scene on the wall changed, back to showing Leonid's ghost-self cowering through a sleepless night. The way he tossed and turned and shook, Leonid could tell that his ghost-self heard every gunshot, every rev

of the truck engine across the street, every continuing *boom* of the artillery fire growing ever nearer. In the morning, he saw his ghost-self eavesdropping on guards who spoke of bayonets sliding through bodies, of finding jewels hidden in the clothing of the dead.

And he saw his ghost-self staying silent, still cowering, not confronting anybody about the evil they'd done.

Leonid's ghost-self was sent to live with distant relatives more than a thousand miles away. He saw himself go as though he had no choice in the matter. Perhaps he didn't.

Finally he saw his ghost-self join the counter-revolutionaries—the people fighting against those who'd wanted the tsar and his family dead. But it was hard to see what he actually accomplished before he was caught and executed.

Nothing, Leonid told himself. You know you accomplished nothing. Otherwise, you would have been forced to live your ghost-self's life. It would have mattered too much for you to miss it.

Why couldn't he just be glad that he'd escaped?

* * *

Time passed—or would have passed, if they hadn't been in a time hollow. The grand duchesses, Chip, Katherine, and Leonid spoke to Jonah and Gavin/Alexei at what might have been regular intervals, if there had been any way to measure time. Chip, Katherine, and Daniella/Anastasia tried to teach Maria and Leonid what to expect from the twenty-first century. Leonid let the words flow over him without even trying to understand:

"computer," "iPod," "video game," "refrigerator." "Smartphones," "suburbs," "rap." "PlayStation," "text message," "Instagram."

Only once did Leonid rouse himself to ask a question.

"And does everyone just automatically have their own Elucidator?" he murmured, in one of those rare moments when Katherine and Anastasia stopped chattering. "Will the Grand Duchess Maria and I get ours as soon as we arrive?"

"Oh, no," Katherine exclaimed, after gaping at him for what could have been a full minute, if there'd been any time passing. "You thought you were going to a time period with Elucidators? No, no, no. How could you have thought that?"

"When you only know the past, everything in the future seems equally outlandish," Maria defended Leonid. She turned to face him directly. "Anastasia—I mean, Daniella—already explained this to me, but I guess nobody told you. Elucidators haven't been invented yet where we're going in the twenty-first century. JB is from a time even farther off into the future. That's why he has an Elucidator and the rest of us won't."

Leonid remembered how he'd felt arriving in the time hollow, when he'd seen it as just another prison. It seemed even more like a prison now—one with a dwindling supply of air.

"But . . . Jonah had an Elucidator in that basement in 1918," Leonid protested. "Katherine had an Elucidator when she came back to the basement and screamed, 'If you want to live, grab on to me!'"

"I *wish* those had been our Elucidators to keep!" Katherine said. "But they weren't. I'm pretty sure Jonah has at least one more trip to the past he'll have

to take—and JB had better let me go with him. But after that, I probably won't get to travel through time ever again."

She sounded both wistful and terrified, all at once.

"*I'll* be okay with never traveling to the past again," Anastasia said with a shiver.

"Me too," Maria agreed.

Will I? Leonid wondered.

* * *

JB was coming back to retrieve them all. In their hospital room in the distant future, Jonah and Gavin/Alexei had healed enough that no one in the twenty-first century would be able to tell that they'd been shot. They were being sent home—to their twenty-first-century homes—and so was everyone in the time hollow.

"You have to remember to call Anastasia and Alexei only Daniella and Gavin from now on," Katherine reminded the others as they stood waiting for JB to arrive. "*Please* don't anybody do anything that makes JB reconsider, and decide we need to wait here longer."

"I thought we were just waiting here for Jonah and, uh, Gavin to heal," Leonid said. "I thought we were just . . . killing time."

"Don't you think JB wanted *us* to heal, too?" Katherine asked. "From all the horrible things we saw?"

Was that possible? Even though they'd been in a time hollow where people couldn't heal?

Leonid had seen even more horrors while he was in the time hollow. He'd watched his uncle being shot; he'd watched the execution of his own

ghost-self. He'd watched entirely too many battles in the cataclysmic events he now knew to call World War I and the Russian Revolution; he'd watched every last moment because he'd been curious about men and boys he'd once known who had gone off to fight.

Died in battle. Maimed in battle. Returned home a shell of himself. Shot trying to desert . . .

No one he'd known had fared well.

And then there was what happened to Clothilde.

Had everyone been so miserable just because 1918 was a terrible time, and Russia then was a terrible place?

Wasn't there anything Leonid could do?

JB appeared in the middle of the room.

"Finally!" Katherine exclaimed.

"I see life in a time hollow has once again failed to teach you patience," JB said, teasing her.

"So what's the plan?" Chip asked.

"You, Katherine, and Daniella will land back in the exact spot on the sidewalk where you were right before you left the twenty-first century," JB said. "Leonid and Maria will land a few steps away. Luckily, we're certain that none of your neighbors will be looking out their windows right at that moment."

"It was kind of getting dark then, anyhow," Katherine added. "Even if the neighbors see Leonid and Maria arrive, they'll probably just think their eyes are playing tricks on them."

"Let's hope so," JB said. "There is a fifty-one-percent chance that one of your neighbors will look outside moments after that and see a group of

teenagers congregating on the sidewalk and think it's a gang. A Mrs. Greer?"

Katherine made a disgusted face.

"In case that does happen," JB continued, "we're going to try to avoid having her become so agitated that she calls the police. So as soon as Maria and Leonid land, they'll roll over into the bushes, and wait there until Angela shows up in her car. Daniella, you and Gavin will wait with them. Chip, as soon as you can walk without stumbling, you head straight to your house. Katherine, you and Jonah will go home as quickly as you can too. Please don't any of you do anything to make your parents suspicious."

JB acted like this was a military maneuver or something—an event that had to be precisely planned, where a miscalculation of mere seconds could doom them to failure and death.

Maybe the situation was that dire. Maybe time travel was always like that.

Leonid felt his innards twist in knots.

I have to try, he told himself. *I have to. . . .*

"Ready?" JB asked.

Everyone else nodded. It took Leonid a moment to follow along, to get his head to bob up and down like it was supposed to.

Just as Leonid hoped, JB reached into his pocket and pulled out the pocketwatch-like device that Leonid thought had to be an Elucidator. JB tapped some controlled pattern on the front of it. The motion reminded Leonid of someone opening a combination lock.

"Send all these kids back to—" JB began.

Leonid launched himself toward JB. He slammed into the man and yanked the Elucidator from JB's grasp.

"Send me back to July 17, 1918, with Clothilde!" Leonid screamed.

* * *

Leonid was not used to traveling through time alone. Every other trip he'd made to a new time period, he'd been in a cluster with the grand duchesses and Katherine and Chip, if not the tsarevitch and Jonah or JB as well.

Traveling through time all by himself was terrifying.

"God?" he whispered. "Are you at least with me?"

Somehow that made him feel a little better. Maybe he should have prayed more *before* he tackled JB?

God would want me to rescue Clothilde, he told himself stubbornly.

How else could Leonid have possibly managed to yank the Elucidator from JB's hands? How could he have done that on his own, without divine intervention?

I just need a little more intervention . . ., Leonid thought. *Like making sure I land safely without half of St. Petersburg seeing me appear out of nowhere . . .*

It would be late when he arrived—as he understood it, he would likely arrive a split second after he'd been yanked out of time from the basement massacre halfway across Russia.

How much could it mess up time for him to appear to have traveled more than a thousand miles in that split second?

Clothilde will be the only one who sees me, Leonid told himself.

The empty darkness around him was terrifying; the sensation of falling through time made his stomach churn and his head spin.

Then lights appeared in the distance.

Almost there, Leonid told himself. *Almost . . .*

Everything speeded up, and Leonid felt as though he was being torn limb from limb, torn down into nothingness.

But then he landed, and it appeared that his body was still whole and complete. Miraculously, he was still alive.

For a moment he could only lie still, doing nothing but existing.

It is not enough simply to exist, Leonid reminded himself. I am not in a time hollow anymore. Time can run out on me. JB will surely see where I went and try to catch me. . . .

Cautiously, he forced himself to sit up. The darkness around him was as thick and heavy as evil itself. Clothilde could be right beside him and he wouldn't even know it.

"Do you have any way to give me a small light that nobody else would notice?" he whispered to the thing in his hand he'd stolen from JB. The Elucidator.

A small, dull glow appeared around his hand. It seemed to come from a spoon Leonid found himself clutching. Leonid remembered hearing that Elucidators could take on the appearance of different objects in different times.

It turns into a spoon at a time when people are starving? Leonid wondered. Is it mocking me or sympathizing?

There was no way to tell, but he began moving his hand and the spoon in ever-widening circles. He could see a rough wooden floor. He could see the edge of a tattered blanket.

He could see dark hair.

"Clothilde?" he whispered. "Clothilde, wake up."

She was either deep in sleep or very nearly dead. Leonid had to repeat her name three more times before she stirred.

"Masha," she murmured. "Name is . . . Masha. Too dangerous . . . to be Clothilde anymore."

"I know," Leonid said impatiently. "That's why I'm here. I came for you, Clothilde. I'm taking you somewhere safe."

It was too complicated to tell her that that safe place would be in the future. He would use the strategy of his own rescue: grab first, explain later.

He reached for her hand, and prepared to tell the Elucidator where they needed to go.

"Take us—" he hissed.

But before he could finish his command, Clothilde yanked her hand away.

"You are only a dream, tormenting me with what might have been," she murmured. "Go away. It's too late."

"I'm real!" Leonid insisted, reaching for her hand again. "I came back for you! I love you!"

Clothilde hid her hands under the blanket.

"You love . . . who I used to be," she said. "That's over. Everything and everyone I ever loved is gone. I'm going to die now too."

"I'm here!" Leonid said. "You don't have to die!"

Clothilde blinked in the dim glow of the light from the spoon, and for a moment it seemed that she might push herself up and reach for Leonid's hand.

Instead, she used what seemed to be her only remaining strength to slowly shake her head, barely getting it to move side to side.

"It's . . . too hard to care anymore," she whispered. "Too hard to get my hopes up ever again, too hard to try anything new . . . I *want* to die. It's all I long for now."

Leonid thought maybe he was reading her lips more than actually hearing her words, because she seemed incapable of speaking aloud. Or maybe she'd given up on speaking aloud.

Her eyelids sagged. It seemed they would never open again.

She doesn't want to open them again, Leonid thought.

Maybe he could make her look at him again. Maybe he could force her to live. To try, anyway.

But would that be even crueler than letting her die in peace?

I'm like Katherine, Leonid thought.

Katherine was always assuming that other people were just like her and would want the same things she wanted.

Leonid had made the same kind of mistake with Clothilde. Leonid wanted to live. Clothilde wanted to die.

How had Leonid not seen that?

"Good . . . bye," Clothilde breathed.

Leonid heard the tramp of footsteps outside Clothilde's room, possibly even outside Clothilde's house.

Soldiers? Leonid thought. *Bolsheviks going door to door, looking for their enemies?*

What if Leonid had lost his one chance at survival by going back for someone who didn't even want to live?

The door of Clothilde's room creaked open. Frantically, Leonid glanced around for somewhere to hide. But away from the glow of his

Elucidator/spoon, there was nothing but darkness.

And then there was a gleam of light in the doorway. A gleam of light that showed him two familiar faces: the Grand Duchesses Maria and Anastasia.

* * *

"We came back for you, Leonid!" Anastasia whispered.

Maybe he should think of her as Daniella instead, but it seemed wrong in 1918.

"Why?" Leonid asked. "I'm nobody. I'm supposed to live out the next ten years, and then die. All for nothing."

"But you changed your fate!" Maria whispered, as she and Anastasia slipped into the room and shut the door behind them. "You went into the basement that night—this very night, actually—because you wanted to rescue us. You were so brave!"

"Brave?" Leonid snorted. Having failed to save Clothilde, he could hide his shame no more. "I was never brave, only foolish. And . . . maybe selfish, too."

"Selfish?" Anastasia whispered, sounding shocked.

Leonid had to confess now.

"I was thinking so many things when I got up from my bed and went down into that basement with the rest of you," Leonid said. "With one step, I'd think, *I need to warn the family that some of the guards want to kill them—they need to be ready! I need to help them, even if it means I die myself!* With the next step, I'd think, *No, it's just that the family is being taken somewhere safe, far away from the fighting. I have to go with them! I can't be left behind!* So—

what if I was just trying to save my own life? What if I was *only* being selfish?"

He remembered lying in his makeshift bed listening to the boom of artillery shelling growing ever closer. Some of the explosions sent enough light into the room that he could see the bag of toy soldiers Alexei had given him that afternoon.

I could use that as an excuse to go over there, he'd thought. To see what's really going on. To see if anyone can survive this awful night. . . .

Now Leonid was back in the same awful night, just in a different awful place. In the darkness, he couldn't even see the expressions on the grand duchesses' faces. Probably that was a mercy. Probably they both looked disappointed in him. Maybe even disgusted.

Then Maria spoke.

"Leonid, it's not selfish to want to live," she said gently. "In that place, in that time, in that life you had . . . it's not surprising you were confused. And failing at something doesn't mean you weren't brave."

"And either way, you were casting your fate with us," Anastasia added. "You were so loyal and true. Even the guards saw that. I'm sure that's part of the reason they wanted to let you live, and took you across the street when they were planning to kill the rest of us."

Was that the proper way to look at what Leonid had done and what had happened?

"It was brave of you, too, to try to save Clothilde," Anastasia whispered. "Even if she didn't want that choice."

Leonid held the glowing spoon/Elucidator a little closer to Clothilde. In the dim light, she was beautiful again. But Leonid didn't let himself move

any nearer, to see if she was still breathing or not.

"JB said he knew you would come back here, if he gave you any opportunity," Anastasia told him. "He said he needed to let you try, or you could never let go of the past."

"She almost started to reach for my hand," Leonid said. "Maybe if I'd come a little earlier, when she was stronger . . ."

"But you couldn't have," Maria said. "You were shut out until this moment. The limitations of time aren't your fault. Any more than it's our fault we couldn't save the rest of our family."

"It only took us an eternity in the time hollow to figure *that* out," Anastasia said.

Leonid thought he heard the tramp of feet outside again.

"But you endangered yourselves again by coming to get me," he said. "You! The grand duchesses!"

"That's because you're our family too," Maria said. "Those of us with royal blood, we didn't have any choice when we were imprisoned in the house in Ekaterinburg. But don't you think you could have gone up to the guards any time you wanted and said, *I've had enough of the Romanovs. I want to be a Bolshevik now. Let me side with you!*"

"I never once thought of doing that," Leonid protested.

"And don't you think that was brave?" Anastasia said.

"Just because you didn't accomplish anything of historical significance between 1918 and the 1920s, that doesn't mean your whole life was a waste," Maria said.

"And don't you feel like you still *can* do more with your life?" Anastasia asked. "Isn't that why you jumped when we were down in the basement and

we heard Katherine scream, 'If you want to live, grab on to me!?' Why *you* chose to go on living?"

Leonid let himself remember that moment in the basement. The entire time he'd been in the time hollow, he'd avoided thinking about it, because that had been the most terrifying moment of his life. The smoke, the guns, the screams, the confusion . . . He could remember it all only in pieces, because evidently that was how his brain worked when it was thoroughly soaked in fear.

Katherine's words, "If you want to live . . ." had come at him like a rope thrown at a drowning man, like a ladder leading out of a burning building. It was, finally, a choice, presented at a moment when he thought he had no choices left.

Of course he'd wanted to live. Of course.

"Do you still want to live now?" Anastasia asked. "Or do you want to stay here?"

"I want to live," Leonid said. "I want to live."

Just as the door began to open again, just as he saw the tip of a bayonet scratching the wood, he threw himself at the two grand duchesses.

"Take us to the future!" he hissed. "Take us where we belong now!"

Nothing happened. Nothing changed. Leonid and the grand duchesses stayed in the darkness of Clothilde's hovel and 1918.

But the door kept swinging open.

* * *

"Remember, the chances for getting in or out of 1918 are spotty," Maria whispered into Leonid's ear. "I've got everything timed on the Elucidator JB

gave us, but our next chance is almost two minutes away. In the meantime . . .
."

In the meantime, the door to Clothilde's hovel was opening even wider. Leonid hunched down with the grand duchesses, hiding his glowing spoon behind his back. Had he moved his hand quickly enough?

In the doorway he could see men in belted tunics—were those uniforms? Were the men soldiers? Police?

"The enemies of the revolution in this house do not even dare to greet us," the man in the lead roared.

Men spilled into the room, holding lanterns and bayonets and handguns.

"Show your faces!" the leader called. "Admit your crimes!"

Leonid, Maria, and Anastasia stayed silent. As if they were all thinking together, they slid back toward the wall, away from the lantern light and the guns. Leonid tried to reach for Clothilde, to pull her out of sight too, but it was too late.

One of the men found her.

"Just a dead body," he said scornfully, kicking her. "Probably died of fright. Deprived us of the chance to kill her, the coward!"

Thank you, God, for not letting them kill her, Leonid prayed. *And please, let us escape before they kill us. . . .*

"Thirty seconds," Maria whispered in Leonid's ear.

The man nearest to them held his lantern higher, so the light spread farther. Leonid pulled his knees up against his chest as tightly as he could. But the circle of light was almost to the tip of his boot.

The man with the lantern took a step closer.

"Get us out of here!" Maria hissed, so softly that Leonid wasn't sure either Elucidator could hear her.

But one must have. Because, suddenly, everything vanished.

* * *

Leonid zoomed through time, clutching on to Maria and Anastasia. His heart pounded in his chest; his eyes kept seeing the edge of light that had come within a hair's distance of his boots.

Another second, and the soldiers would have seen Leonid.

Another two seconds, and they probably would have killed him. Him and Maria and Anastasia . . .

"I had to be rescued *again*," Leonid said with a groan. "Rescuing me just endangered you."

"No—rescuing you got us all out of there safely," Anastasia said, with some of her usual sassiness back.

"But—you didn't have to be in danger," Leonid said. "Why in the world did JB send the two of you? If someone had seen you—if someone had recognized you—"

"JB said we were the only ones who could get in and out fast enough, since that was our native time," Maria said. "Katherine or Chip might still have been lying on the ground with timesickness when the soldiers showed up."

"And—we're the ones who need you in the twenty-first century," Anastasia added.

"Why would you need me there?" Leonid asked. "You're royalty. I'm just a kitchen boy."

"None of us will be the same people where we're going," Maria said. "We'll all need one another."

Leonid thought about Clothilde affecting a French accent. He thought about his Uncle Ivan bringing peasant boy Leonid to the palace. They were people who knew how to change. And Leonid had thought they were the ones he needed, the ones who needed him. But he hadn't been able to save either of them.

"Why did JB even let me *try* to save Clothilde?" Leonid asked. He jerked away from Maria and Anastasia, so they were all three floating separately through the empty darkness. "He could have stopped me, right? Didn't he know it was for nothing?"

"He couldn't tell for sure," Anastasia said. "There was a chance, and that's why he had to let you. If Clothilde had wanted to go with you, maybe . . ."

But she didn't, Leonid thought, his heart aching.

He thought about all the sadness and sorrow he'd seen, about all the people he'd lost.

"Leonid—if we hadn't gotten out of 1918 just then, our next opportunity wouldn't have come until four days later," Maria said. "*That's* how much JB believed in you. And that's how much we wanted to rescue you."

This time he wasn't horrified by the risks they'd taken.

He was honored.

Even with everyone I lost, these are the people I kept, Leonid thought. *And—they've kept me too. They've kept me alive, and they've kept me in their hearts. Katherine, Chip, JB. Maria, Anastasia, and Alexei.*

Then he corrected himself: *No, not Anastasia and Alexei. Daniella and Gavin.*

As they approached the point of time travel where time itself seemed determined to tear everyone apart, Leonid reached out and grabbed Maria's and Daniella's hands. It wasn't because he was scared. It wasn't because he thought *they* might be scared. It was because they all needed one another.

Leonid and the two girls landed on some sort of hard surface—Leonid remembered that JB had called it a sidewalk. A split second later, Katherine, Jonah, and Chip were there too.

"Later!" the three of them called, following JB's orders to run toward their homes.

Leonid rolled toward the bushes alongside Maria, Daniella, and Gavin. Even Gavin moved smoothly, seeming not to worry at all about hitting any small twig or sharp blade of grass that might cut him.

"Are *you* all right, Lenka?" Gavin asked.

"Yes," Leonid said. "But . . . just to let you know . . . I think I'm going to take Katherine's advice and go by 'Leo' here."

"Whatever," Gavin said. "It's your choice."

Alexei never would have said those words to Leonid back in 1918.

Leonid drew air into his lungs, letting go of the strange feeling of traveling through time. He heard a car coming toward them, and its engine sounded oddly smooth and even, not sputtering and cranky like engines back in 1918.

He'd kind of grasped from Chip and Katherine that there might still be problems in the world of the twenty-first century—there might still be children who starved, soldiers who died in battle, people who fought over governments. But all that seemed far away and unbelievable right now. The

air around Leonid seemed full only of possibilities—maybe even the possibility that Leonid himself could help fix some of those problems.

"I want to live," he whispered. "I get to live."

Thank you for reading this eBook.

Find out about free book giveaways, exclusive content, and amazing sweepstakes!
Plus get updates on your favorite books, authors, and more when you join the Simon
& Schuster Teen mailing list.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

or visit us online to sign up at
eBookNews.SimonandSchuster.com/teen

Also by Margaret Peterson Haddix

The Missing

Found

Sent

Sabotaged

Torn

Caught

Risked

Revealed

Sought: An E-Story

The Shadow Children

Among the Hidden

Among the Impostors

Among the Betrayed

Among the Barons

Among the Brave

Among the Enemy

Among the Free

The Palace Chronicles

Just Ella

Palace of Mirrors

The Girl with 500 Middle Names

Because of Anya

Say What?

Dexter the Tough

Running Out of Time

Full Ride

Game Changer

The Always War

Claim to Fame

Uprising

Double Identity

The House on the Gulf

Escape from Memory

Takeoffs and Landings

Turnabout

Leaving Fishers

Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey



SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS
An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020
www.SimonandSchuster.com

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real places are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or places or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2014 by Margaret Peterson Haddix
All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS is a trademark of Simon & Schuster, Inc. For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at 1-866-506-1949 or business@simonandschuster.com.

The Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau can bring authors to your live event. For more information or to book an event, contact the Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau at 1-866-248-3049 or visit our website at www.simonspeakers.com.

Book design by Hilary Zarycky

The text for this book is set in Weiss.

Manufactured in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-4814-3094-4 (eBook)